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# Richmond Times-Dispatch

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FOIA REQUEST FROM TIMES-DISPATCH

Dogwood Dell case: a timeline

## Police chief 'deeply sorry'

Before linking alleged July 4 shooting plot to Dogwood Dell, Smith was told that the location was unknown, records show

BY PATRICK WILSON AND C. SUAREZ ROJAS  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Richmond Police Chief Gerald Smith sounded authoritative on July 6 when he said police had intercepted two men planning to commit a random mass shooting at a city fireworks show.

"We do know that they were coming to do a mass shooting at the Dogwood Dell at our Fourth of July celebration," he told CNN that day.

A tipster who had overheard a conversation and called police said there was a plot for a shooting at a large July Fourth event in Richmond. Smith erroneously claimed in a July 6 news conference that the tipster specified Dogwood Dell amphitheater in Byrd Park as the target.

But not only had the tipster not specified a location, Smith's own department had provided him information in writing before his news conference that the location of any potential incident was "unknown," according to new records the Richmond Times-Dispatch obtained under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

A police official emailed those records to Smith and an assistant seven minutes before Smith's 2 p.m. July 6 news conference. The records also show that Richmond

RECORDS, Page A13



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND, DANIEL SANGJIB MIN AND SHABAN ATHUMAN/TIMES-DISPATCH AND THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

- JULY 1:** Police receive a tip from a caller who says two men have weapons and are planning a mass shooting at a large July Fourth celebration in Richmond. Police arrest one man, seize weapons from a residence, and begin surveillance on the second man.
- JULY 4:** Seven people are killed when gunfire erupts during a Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, Ill., north of Chicago.
- JULY 6:** Richmond police public affairs division emails Chief Gerald Smith information about the arrest of the two men on weapons charges, saying the tipster said the men were planning a shooting in an unknown location in Richmond. The information was vetted by a detective.
- JULY 6:** Police Chief Gerald Smith says in a news conference and in national media interviews that a "hero citizen" prevented a mass shooting at Byrd Park's Dogwood Dell amphitheater on July Fourth, where thousands had gathered to watch fireworks. The announcement alarmed the community.
- JULY 7:** A police spokeswoman clarifies to WRIC-TV that the tipster hadn't specified Dogwood Dell — an erroneous claim that had been made by Smith.
- AUG. 3:** A Richmond prosecutor tells a judge police turned over no evidence showing Dogwood Dell was a target of a mass shooting plot.
- AUG. 16:** Chief Smith said in an interview that detectives could not corroborate outside of the tip that there was a plan for a mass shooting, but said he believes there was and that Dogwood Dell was the target. He said his experience in policing helped him reach that conclusion.
- AUG. 24:** Lincoln Saunders, the city's chief administrative officer, said he supports the chief, who he said reached a "logical conclusion."

**IN DEPTH:** Keep up with our continuing coverage of the alleged Dogwood Dell plot. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the link.

## A growing number of Virginia colleges are waiving SAT and ACT testing requirements

BY JESS NOCERA, ERIC KOLENICH, ANNA BRYSON AND SEAN MCGOEY  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

In March 2020, James River High School junior Irelyn Rogan didn't know if she should sign up for the SAT as schools abruptly closed because of the pandemic and classes shifted to being online and from home.

Having taken the PSAT and not received a score that reflected her grades, Rogan decided not to sit for the standardized exam widely used in college admissions. Between the cost, stress and test anxiety, Rogan decided the best thing was to apply to colleges without a test score.

Now a sophomore at Virginia Commonwealth University studying elementary education, Rogan stands by her decision in



EVA RUSSO/TIMES-DISPATCH  
**Irelyn Rogan did not take the SAT or ACT and was accepted at VCU, where she is a sophomore.**

opting out of college entrance exams.

"I was in a very high-skill-levels center in high school so we [students] were really feeling the pressure from teachers, society and each other, honestly, to take the SAT," Rogan said. "But for myself I've never been good at standardized testing. It's never been my strong suit."

"Looking back now as a sophomore [in college], everyone whether they

TESTING, Page A11

### CULTURE E1



### FALL ARTS PREVIEW

### SPORTS C1

First weekend of high school football inside

### COUPONS

SUNDAY SAVINGS UP TO \$161



## Adopting an Envigo beagle: 'The positives so outweigh anything else'

What it's like to own one of the dogs from the breeding facility

BY COLLEEN CURRAN  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

When Annette Marchioli first adopted Gracie, a 4-year-old beagle rescued from the Envigo breeding facility, she was so timid and frightened that she was shaking and losing fistfuls of hair.

"She looked so pitiful and puny," Marchioli said of the first time she saw Gracie. "Tommy DeSanto from the Richmond SPCA was carrying her in his arms. She was so tiny and timid. Her tail wouldn't come out from between her legs."

But after just a few days at her new family's home in Henrico County's Lakeside neighborhood, along with the help of new beagle brother Rocky, Gracie has grown "leaps and bounds," Marchioli said.

"I thought it would take years for her to adjust, but in a matter of days, we saw



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/TIMES-DISPATCH  
**When Ron Stilwell and Annette Marchioli adopted Gracie, their Envigo beagle, she was "pitiful and puny."**

**WATCH:** Annette Marchioli and Ron Stilwell adopted Gracie from the Richmond SPCA two weeks ago. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

her tail come out from between her legs. She wags her tail. She's so loving and

cozy. She's the best cuddler," Marchioli said.

Gracie is one of 4,000 beagles rescued in July from overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at the Envigo breeding facility in Cumberland County.

Described as a "house of horrors," Envigo housed thousands of beagles in inhumane conditions. In a lawsuit filed in federal

BEAGLES, Page A12

In Nation & World | Ukraine, Russia trade blame on potential threat to nuclear plant | Page B1

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<b>A Metro &amp; State</b>	Weather B3	Scoreboard C2	Sunday Business D4	Home & Garden E6
Lotteries A2	Obituaries B5	Baseball C7	<b>E Culture</b>	TV / History E8
<b>B Nation &amp; World</b>	<b>C Sports</b>	<b>D Commentary</b>	Celebrations E5	<b>F Marketplace</b>

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